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# Providing the "Bear" Necessities

**Meet Our  
"Rock the  
Boat" Winner**

**How one 13-year-old used fur to raise over \$30,000**

**Yoni Grossman-Boder** watched helplessly from his home in Columbia, Maryland, last year as the scene of another terrorist attack in Israel unfolded

money for the ambulance, Yoni decided to sell cuddly teddy bears named "Raffi," short for the Hebrew name, "Rafael," which means "God heals."

Yoni found a distributor willing to sell the bears to him at cost, and he convinced local store owners to sell the bears and donate all the proceeds to tzedakah. In addition, he stuffed order forms for the bears in all his bar mitzvah invitations. So far, Yoni has sold 2,200 bears, earning \$33,000 towards a new ambulance for Israel.

"We're Jews," Yoni declares. "Although we may be citizens of the United States, Israel is our spiritual homeland. We can't decide what happens in the peace process, but we can help Israel and victims of terror." ★

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## HOW YOU CAN HELP...

**Yoni Grossman-Broder's Fund for Magen David Adom Bears for Life**

c/o Beth Shalom Congregation  
8070 Harriet Tubman Lane  
Columbia, MD 21044.

Bears can also be purchased online at [www.magendavidadom.org/bearsforlife.html](http://www.magendavidadom.org/bearsforlife.html).

Remember our "How I Rocked the Boat" contest announcement in the June/July issue? We were looking for stories from JVibe readers on how they "challenged a norm to bring about positive change," and we got several interesting entries. But we picked a winner: Congrats **Sammy Forshner**, age 15, from Colorado, who created quite a stir at his Jewish Day School, when he chose, despite enormous pressure, to decline to participate in a synagogue service that went against his core beliefs. We were impressed with Sammy's thoughtful approach (see essay portion below).

*Think going to a Jewish Day School solves all your problems of religion in the school? Think again! I have been a day school student my entire life. When my school holds an annual weekend Shabbaton in the mountains near our town, I am faced with a dilemma. As an observant liberal Jew, I attend egalitarian Shabbat services every week. But when spending the weekend with my school, I had to make a tough choice on a Friday evening. Do I join in a service where men and women are seated separately and women cannot lead or count in the minyan? It would likely be to my advantage in some ways to do so. After all, some of my teachers, the very people that will give me grades that will go on my permanent (as in college bound) record are supervising this service. Everybody else is in there, so why would I want to stick out?*

To read the rest of this essay, go to [www.JVibe.com/reallife/sammy.shtml](http://www.JVibe.com/reallife/sammy.shtml).



on his television screen. Amid the chaos, 13-year-old Yoni noticed a white ambulance with a red Magen David (Star of David) on its side. The door opened, and out jumped a team of dedicated health care workers. They carefully treated the injured on the scene and then raced to the hospital with the more seriously wounded victims.

"I felt compelled to help," says Yoni, who set his sights high. His goal: to raise \$55,000—enough to donate an ambulance to Magen David Adom, Israel's emergency medical, health, blood and disaster services.

The seventh-grader quickly organized himself for the challenge. To raise